

# School inspection report

Date: 30 January to 1 February 2024

## **Silcoates School**

Wrenthorpe

Wakefield

West Yorkshire

WF2 0PD

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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## Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders fulfil the school's aims through their nurturing and pro-active pastoral care, and provision of a balanced curriculum and wide range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils reach their academic and personal potential and develop an appropriate range of skills as well as pursuing their individual interests and talents.
2. Governors ensure that leaders demonstrate relevant knowledge and skills to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. Since the previous inspection, the new leadership team have addressed many of its recommendations. Leaders have a clear and ambitious vision for the school. Effective and thorough self-evaluation has seen improvements throughout the school, such as the development of greater mental health awareness.
3. Leaders ensure that the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is effective. Well-planned teaching in response to comprehensive individual education plans ensures that staff cater effectively for pupils' learning needs. Individual guidance and training for all staff enable pupils of all abilities, and especially those who have SEND, to achieve their potential. Pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) make rapid progress and achieve a fluent grasp of English.
4. Leaders have introduced major changes in careers education and guidance. Many senior pupils appreciate the increased advice and opportunities they are offered. Younger pupils, for example those in Year 9, have not received the increased guidance for subject options, and have yet to benefit from the improved provision.
5. Children in the early years are well cared for within a safe and happy environment. Their needs are met effectively through the thorough planning of the staff, who provide a varied programme of activities tailored to children's individual needs in all the areas of learning and development.
6. Teachers take considerable care to support individual pupils in their work. Prior learning and knowledge are embedded effectively through regular practice in a range of subjects. As a result, pupils are confident learners and understand how to meet examination requirements. In some lessons, in the senior school, pupils have limited opportunities to develop their critical thinking skills. Effective marking and feedback strategies are consistently used throughout the school, and pupils know how to improve their work.
7. Leaders use of the restorative justice system to resolve behavioural issues in the school supports pupils' moral understanding and the development of their self-knowledge. The behaviour of pupils has improved in the last two years. Leaders continue their efforts to address poor behaviour promptly.
8. The focus on raising the awareness of, and promoting positive mental strategies for, mental health has resulted in the achievement of the Silver Carnegie Award for Mental Health. This benefits pupils by supporting their personal development and emotional wellbeing.
9. Leaders promote a culture in which pupils respect each other through the provision of a planned and well-implemented personal development curriculum. This is supported by specialist teaching and raising awareness of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). As a result, pupils understand and respect the rights and beliefs of others.

10. Arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils are effective. Leaders have sufficient oversight and staff training is thorough. Online safety is maintained through effective filtering and monitoring. Record keeping is appropriate, but in a few cases some details are limited. Pupils feel safe and are confident they can express any concerns, and records show that their concerns are addressed and individuals are supported.
11. Leaders ensure that health and safety measures are sufficient with regard to premises and accommodation. Risk management on the whole is thorough and detailed. In a few cases the risk assessments for educational visits were not sufficiently detailed and did not follow the school's guidelines.

## The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

## Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- further develop the careers guidance and advice for younger pupils so they feel prepared for the choices before them
- provide more opportunities for pupils to develop critical thinking skills
- continue to develop ways to manage and improve pupil behaviour
- ensure that safeguarding records are detailed and comprehensive
- ensure that all educational visits have a robust risk assessment in line with school procedures.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

12. Governors have oversight of school policies through the systems and structures they have put in place, which include committees that oversee various aspects of the school. They know the school well through regular reports from the leadership, visits and stakeholder surveys. This enables them to challenge leaders appropriately.
13. Leaders fulfil their responsibilities effectively. They have a clear and ambitious vision for the school, and regularly undertake a comprehensive self-evaluation. This includes general and more focused surveys with pupils and parents. These lead to improved practice and provision for the educational and welfare needs of the pupils. Some of the most recent changes, such as the increased careers provision, are not embedded sufficiently at the current time for all pupils to benefit from the improvements. Some changes are gradually bringing about improvement, such as the changes to the behaviour policy and sanctions. Survey results show increasingly positive responses from pupils and parents about behaviour in the school.
14. The improvements that the school has made for SEND provision since the last inspection are notably effective. Leaders have resourced the department to ensure that all pupils with SEND are supported by well-planned interventions and make good progress. Their support is personalised and they achieve higher levels of success as a result. Many parents of pupils with SEND responded to the survey highly positively.
15. Leaders understand their responsibilities under the Equality Act. The education provided by the school does not discriminate. A suitable access plan is in place and reasonable adjustments are made for those pupils with SEND.
16. Leaders respond in a timely manner to concerns and complaints from parents in line with a suitable complaints policy. Complaints are recorded and receive an appropriate response. Information is made available and provided to parents as required. Regular reports to parents on pupils' progress, including children in the early years, are detailed and informative.
17. Leaders within the early years demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role. Safeguarding procedures are rigorous and children are well cared for within a safe and happy environment. Leaders hold regular supervision meetings with staff and staff attend training courses as required. Children's needs are catered for effectively.
18. Governors and leaders ensure that compliance with relevant health and safety laws is thorough. On the whole, leaders' oversight is systematic with conscientious recordkeeping. Health and safety risk assessments are thorough and mitigating actions are comprehensive. Some risk assessments for school trips and visits although appropriate, lacked detail and did not adhere to the school's formal processes. There is an effective annual safeguarding review.
19. Leaders ensure that the school fulfils its stated aims to provide an all-round education, supported by nurturing and proactive pastoral care, where every pupil is supported to reach their academic potential and develop the skills, qualities and aptitudes to lead a full, productive and happy life. Older pupils with responsibilities, such as the heads of school and houses, spoke of their individual success with pride, stating that the school's supportive and nurturing environment had allowed them to fulfil and surpass their ambitions.

## The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

**20. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

21. Leaders plan the curriculum with care and ensure it is taught effectively. They systematically monitor pupil progress through external and internal assessments to check that pupils make good progress against expectations. Where necessary, extra support and intervention by teaching staff ensure pupils of all abilities have the appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills for the next steps in their learning.
22. Almost all pupils attain grades at GCSE and A level in line with or above the predictions based upon their starting points, including those who have SEND. Pupils with EAL achieve above their predictions as they make rapid progress with their fluency in English and are supported as necessary. All pupils are well supported with specific advice, training and support, which are regularly checked and reviewed with pupils and their parents. Results of pupils in Year 6 show good progress from their starting points.
23. The majority of children in the early years achieve their developmental milestones by the end of Reception because a varied programme of activities is tailored to children's individual needs. Children engage enthusiastically in their learning, inspired by well-planned activities. They speak confidently and use a wide range of vocabulary. The setting is appropriately resourced and children experience all required areas of learning and development.
24. All pupils make good progress in developing their linguistic and communication skills. In English lessons in senior and junior schools, well-planned and thought-provoking activities allow pupils to interpret and respond to texts effectively. They articulate perspectives clearly and produce well-developed writing in a range of formats. Across the wider curriculum, pupils listen attentively and speak confidently when in lessons or performing in public. Reading skills are encouraged and developed, for example, in the junior school through the accelerated reading scheme, or in the senior school book club which successfully brings a range of new texts into pupils' lives, and results in confident, articulate pupils.
25. Pupils' mathematical skills are well developed as a result of a systematic process of reinforcing their factual recall and opportunities to apply their skills. Pupils are confident in the use of their mathematical skills across the curriculum. The more practical subjects effectively develop aesthetic and creative skills where guidance allows individual talents to develop and flourish. Pupils take pleasure in specialist activities like a choral masterclass.
26. Lesson planning is thorough, and teachers know their subject and individual pupils well. A planned focus on examination technique and requirements, especially in the upper school, prepares pupils well and gives them confidence in their abilities. Considerable care is taken to support pupils in their work, ensuring tasks are matched to their ability.
27. Some senior school teaching does not present the opportunity to develop pupils' critical thinking skills in preparation for higher education courses. In the junior school, pupils enjoy the challenge of applying prior learning and encountering new knowledge because of the engaging learning activities.
28. Pupils are keen and enthusiastic to achieve in their lessons, which contributes to their good progress. Teachers give effective feedback and pupils enjoy self-marking as it gives them ownership of their learning. From an early age, they set themselves targets for improvement and demonstrate



real pleasure in their progress. Pupils feel that lessons are a safe environment in which to make mistakes and voice their own ideas and opinions.

29. Pupils value and take full advantage of wide-ranging opportunities for recreation, increasing skills and supporting their personal development. For example, they enjoy developing survival skills collaboratively during outdoor learning, taking part in mindfulness activities, walking the school's therapy dog or participating in extra-curricular and house activities.

### **The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation**

- 30. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

31. There is a comprehensive programme for personal, social, health, economic education (PSHE) and relationship and sex education (RSE). It is delivered by a core team of suitably trained teachers. Leaders are assured of the effectiveness through assessing pupils' understanding on a regular basis.
32. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to develop their spirituality through the curriculum, and they encourage pupils to appreciate the world around them. For example, educational visits stimulate pupils' sense of awe and wonder. The chapel is also used to support pupils' understanding of spirituality and beliefs in the weekly assemblies.
33. Pupils' moral understanding is developed in line with the ethos of the school. They are encouraged to discuss their understanding in decision-making and morality through the restorative justice structure. This develops their self-knowledge and encourages them to make wiser choices in the future. Older pupils articulate the view that the school encourages them to become responsible members of society. The sense of fairness across the school and unconditional respect 'is part of who we are'.
34. Most pupils behave well because they understand these expectations. Some behaviour is less than the expected standard. Leaders have provided different social spaces for pupils and altered the rewards and sanctions system to allow for a more immediate response to disrespectful behaviour. Pupils of all ages feel that the system is fair and positively reinforced by the majority of staff. Logs show that behaviour has improved over the last two years and leaders are continuing to evaluate whether more needs to be done.
35. Leaders have developed appropriate policies to prevent bullying, in so far as reasonably practical, and these are implemented effectively. Various initiatives take place during the year to educate pupils about bullying, how to prevent it and what to do should they encounter it. As a result, pupils are aware that bullying does occur, they can report it, and that matters will be addressed through the restorative justice system. This often includes parents as well as pupils. The school achieved the gold standard from the Anti-Bullying Alliance in 2022.
36. The physical education curriculum does not discriminate. All pupils have access to all sporting activities offered by the school. As a result, pupils' participation levels in a wide range of activities are high and they speak enthusiastically about the opportunities they have. Pupils recognise how regular exercise, relaxation and creative pastimes impact positively on their mental health and emotional wellbeing.
37. Leaders work hard to support pupils with their mental health. They have resourced a counselling service that includes weekly drop-in sessions, as well as extra pastoral staff to help support and educate pupils. The school achieved the Carnegie Mental Health Silver Award in 2023.
38. Appropriate systems for the supervision of pupils are in place. The attendance and admission registers are properly maintained and absences followed up. The school premises and accommodation are well maintained. Health and safety practices are implemented effectively. Precautions are taken to reduce the risk from fire. Fire evacuation drills take place termly, and staff receive regular fire training.

39. Suitable arrangements and accommodation are in place to care for pupils who become unwell or who have specific medical needs. Staff receive regular training in first aid and all staff in the early years are trained in paediatric first aid.

**The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing**

**40. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

41. Leaders ensure that within PSHE lessons, opportunities are provided to develop understanding of finance and preparation for life in British society. For example, pupils explore the value of money through the '£10 Challenge', and older pupils plan and manage the leavers' ball.
42. The pastoral system uses restorative justice methods for pupils to resolve disputes and redress wrongdoing. As a result, pupils appreciate the need for rules and laws to help maintain a peaceful society. Pupils understand from an early age that living in a democracy means that they accept that others may think differently to them. The appointment of a member of staff with responsibility for EDI has supported pupils' understanding of respect for others and where it could be developed further.
43. Younger pupils engage effectively with different religious and cultural perspectives through a range of curricular and extra-curricular activities. Pupils in Year 6 spoke insightfully about their experiences in celebrating a Sikh festival. Pupils understand different religious beliefs and appreciate the value of knowing about others' lifestyles, philosophies and faiths. Senior pupils develop their understanding through interfaith forums. During one well-attended session in the chapel, pupils and staff of different faiths answered questions about the theology and practice of their religions. Their respectful interest demonstrated the religious tolerance that leaders nurture in the school community.
44. Pupils, with increasing emphasis in the senior years, are prepared well for their adult lives. They communicate confidently, politely and with respect to adults. Pupils mix well with others when working in groups. Leaders have introduced a Model United Nation event, to enable pupils to experience roles that contribute to global developments. All pupils feel tolerance is a significant aspect of the school culture and they understand the British values, such as the rule of law and democracy. Younger pupils can also identify and discuss the relevance of these. They learn about British society through educational visits such as visiting parliament and a workshop with local police. Assemblies frequently involve a wide range of pupils articulating their diverse perspectives on life confidently in a respectful context, developing their understanding of LGBTQ perspectives.
45. The careers provision in the school has recently undergone significant development. Leaders have developed a well-resourced teaching area, introduced sessions to support on applications to universities with challenging entry requirements and held focused careers breakfast meetings. Pupils are given personal guidance, which includes advice on alternative post 16 and 18 provision. Individual one-to-one meetings with pupils in the senior school to discuss options and future choices at each stage of their school lives are ongoing. Pupils in Year 9 and 10 recognise that changes have been made, but still feel some uncertainty about making decisions about their own future. Leaders are seeking to provide information and guidance earlier to alleviate these concerns.
46. In the senior school, pupils are aware of their social responsibilities and engage with the local community, for example in their volunteering through The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Senior pupils supported preparations for the junior school's production of *Aladdin Trouble*, teaching the production team new skills. The senior prefects take responsibility for house activities and fundraising events for their chosen local and national charities. Leaders ensure that the house

structure and weekly events contribute to pupils' social and cultural development through exciting, competitive activities which engage a wide range of different aged pupils.

### **The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society**

**47. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Safeguarding

48. Governors and leaders implement a comprehensive and robust safeguarding policy to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils, including children in the early years. Governors meet regularly with the designated safeguarding leads (DSL) and assure themselves of the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements through regular reviews.
49. Leaders work effectively with external agencies and make timely referrals to children's services, the local authority designated officer and the police, if necessary. When incidents do occur, they are managed well. Safeguarding records are kept securely and used effectively to monitor and track change as required. In a few instances, records have limited detail, for example the records of informal discussions. Records are transferred in a timely manner.
50. Staff undertake up-to-date statutory safeguarding training, as well as training relevant to specific roles and the dangers of extremism. Leaders check staff understanding through regular assessments. This enables staff to be proactive and confident in identifying potential safeguarding concerns, including any relating to child-on-child abuse. Governors and those with designated safeguarding lead responsibilities receive appropriate training and understand their statutory duties.
51. Pupils know how to stay safe, including online. Pupils are clear about who to go to if they have worries or a concern, and there are methods of reporting concerns in both senior and junior sections of the school. Leaders ensured that boxes were available to report concerns anonymously. Leaders take suitable actions in relation to online filtering and monitoring to keep pupils safe and governors review arrangements for online safety. Pupils report that they feel safe physically, emotionally and online, and can speak to any member of staff with their concerns.
52. There is a systematic method of identifying the more vulnerable pupils in the school, and leaders take appropriate steps to ensure their needs are met when considering safeguarding matters.
53. Leaders ensure that the requirements relating to the suitability of staff, volunteers and governors are met. Recruitment panels are suitably trained in safer recruitment procedures. The single central record of appointments is kept appropriately with effective oversight of procedures from the governors.

### The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

- 54. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## School details

<b>School</b>	Silcoates School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	384/6027
<b>Registered charity number</b>	1158796
<b>Address</b>	Silcoates School Wrenthorpe Wakefield West Yorkshire WF2 0PD
<b>Phone number</b>	01924 291614
<b>Email address</b>	enquiries@silcoates.org.uk
<b>Website</b>	www.silcoates.org.uk
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Michael Hunter
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Chris Wainman
<b>Age range</b>	3–18
<b>Number of pupils</b>	550
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	16 October 2019

## Information about the school

55. Silcoates School is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged between 3 and 18 years, situated in 52 acres of parkland on the outskirts of Wakefield. The school was founded in 1820. Originally a boys' boarding school, it became a day school in 1995 and fully co-educational in the early 1990s. The spiritual ethos of the school is broadly Christian, in line with its foundation, and is open to families of all faiths and none.
56. The school is a charitable incorporated trust, overseen by a board of governors. The current headteacher and chair of governors have been appointed since the previous inspection.
57. The school has identified 116 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Three pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
58. English is an additional language (EAL) for eight pupils.
59. The school states its aims are to provide an all-round education, supported by nurturing and proactive pastoral care, where every pupil is supported to reach their academic potential and develop the skills, qualities and aptitudes to lead a full, productive and happy life. Silcoates seeks to be an open, welcoming and inclusive community which focuses on the core values of tolerance, understanding and service to others.



## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

30 January to 1 February 2024

60. A team of five inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

61. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

62. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

**How are association independent schools in England inspected?**

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
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